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IO/PSC FOR DENNIS HANKINS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/06/2017

TAGS: KPKO PREL UNSC MASS ML

SUBJECT: MALI EXPLORING CONTRIBUTION OF TROOPS FOR THE HYBRID OPERATION IN DARFUR

REF: STATE 90022

Classified By: Political officer Glenn Fedzer
for Reason 1.4 (B) and (E)

¶1. (U) Reftel demarche was delivered jointly by DATT and POLOFF to Brigadier General Salif Traore, the Secretary General for the Malian Ministry of Defense. Embassy made clear that it understood Mali was under pressure to address conflicting priorities, specifically given the need to dedicate resources to control ungoverned territories in Northern Mali. Despite the potential conflict, Traore was supportive of participating in the UN-AU mission, and was "sure" Mali would make some contribution. When asked if the size of the contribution would be at company level or higher, Traore said "much more than a company," but noted that such a move would require internal consultations before a decision could be reached. General Traore asked if the US would pay the costs of training and equipping such a mission, and was told that the United Nations could pick up some of the costs, and the United States may be able to assist with limited training and some additional equipment. Traore's aide-de-camp said he would examine the needs and prepare a list of requirements and resources Mali might require if it were to participate.

¶2. (C) Comment: Mali has been on the receiving end of ACOTA and other mil-to-mil assistance for several years, and has yet to commit units to peacekeeping missions, preferring instead to send individual observers. Traore is likely to continue to commit observers to Darfur, but the positive response on committing units has been heard before--without results. Mali is under considerable domestic and regional political pressure, including from the USG, to better secure its borders, and in a competition for resources, peacekeeping missions understandably may prove the lower priority. However, with Mali increasingly aware that neighbors like Senegal have taken advantage of UN missions to improve on the equipment, training, and pay of its military, Traore's encouraging words may signal a change. Post will advise the department of any additional response from the Malian military on possible Darfur contributions.
Leonard